

## DVD & Blu-ray Reviews

# Lou Reed Tribute – DVD Box Set (2014)

This set provides an extensive review of Lou Reed's career.



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*A 3-DVD collection, including The Velvet Underground – Under Review; Punk Revolution NYC: The Velvet Underground, The NY Dolls & The CBGBS Set and The Sacred Triangle – Bowie, Iggy & Lou (1971-1973)*

*Studio: Sexy Intellectual / DVD315042 (3 DVDs)*

*Video: 4:3 color & black & white 16×9 (The Velvet Underground – Under Review)*

*Audio: English Dolby Digital Stereo*

*Length: 279 minutes*

*Rating: \*\*\*1/2*

When Lou Reed passed away last year, a legitimate rock icon was lost. As the central songwriter, guitarist and vocalist for the original underground sixties band, Velvet Underground, he rewrote rock history. The gritty, visceral world of drug addiction and Lower Eastside street vibe assaulted the benign world of sixties culture. Reed became a lightning rod for the punk and glam rock bands to follow. Sexy Intellectual has released a three-DVD collection detailing the seminal influences of Reed on rock music. *Lou Reed Tribute* is a thorough, at times tedious history of a rock pioneer.

The first DVD *The Velvet Underground – Under Review* explores in great detail the formation and ascent of this phenomenal group. Led by folk/rock guitarist Lou Reed and avant-garde viola player, John Cale, the group adopted an eccentric style that sounds original to this day. Songs like “White Light, White Heat”, “Venus In Furs”, “Heroin” and “Sunday Morning” are classics. Reed’s “Dylan-esque” vocals and Cale’s droning classicism were groundbreaking. The film details the welcome and unwelcome sponsorship of Andy Warhol. (Warhol pushed Nico onto the band). There is sustained analysis of the music and recording. Both drummer Mo Tucker and guitarist Doug Yule (Cale’s replacement) are informative. Their legendary run at Max’s Kansas City is recounted with emphasis on Reed’s departure from the group.

*Punk Revolution NYC: The Velvet Underground, The NY Dolls & The CBGBs Set* revisits the re-emergence of New York in the music scene. Confined to Greenwich Village folk in the sixties, New York was no longer the center of

the rock universe. New York-based bands like Mamas & Papas and The Lovin' Spoonful started in the Big Apple, but migrated to California. New York was in decline. But on the Lower East Side, a gritty darker collection of bands emerged. The Velvet Underground was at the forefront of this movement. Propelled by Lou Reed's visceral lyrics, he teamed with John Cale to initiate a new genre-defying construct. Themes of death, sado-masochism, drugs and urban desolation fit the minimalist song structures. A lot of the off-Broadway, Warhol plays (especially *Pork*) are profiled. The New York Dolls and their residency at Mercer Art Center became the "Rolling Stones" of the glitter scene. The hard-edged androgynous band laid the ground work for future rock and rollers. An interesting side issue was the apparent backlash against the cross dressing of the band. Suicide (the band) and their jagged guitar sound are also highlighted.

*The Sacred Triangle* (originally released in 2010) depicts the confluence of Reed, David Bowie and Iggy Pop. In essence the mutual synergy among the three artists was generated by VU. Both Pop and Bowie were huge fans and incorporated these musical themes into their work. Reed assimilated the glam rock visage of England especially on the breakout album, *Transformer*. This film does offer some insights into the relationship of these performers, but there is a noticeable lack of concert footage.

*Lou Reed Tribute* sheds some much needed light on a true rock icon. While there is ample information, the DVD collection does include a lot of live performances which deadens the pace of the films.

—Robbie Gerson

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